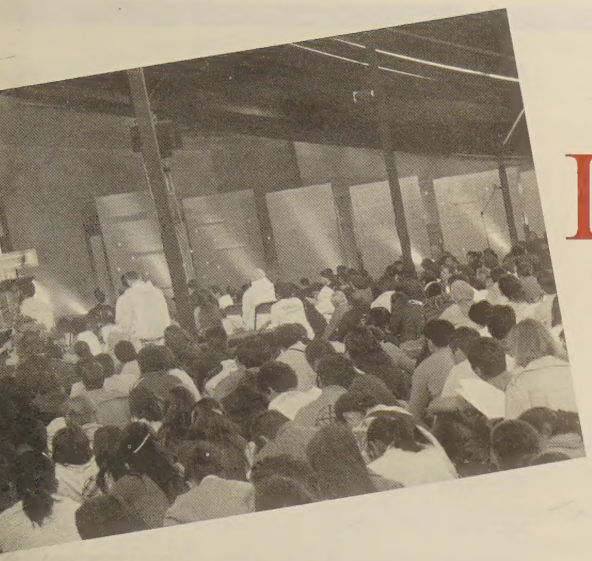

Letter from Taizé

n° 270 Quarterly 0,75 €
2011/1

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For a Fraternal World

Last year the earthquake, then a hurricane, then the disease of cholera ravaged Haiti. As a result, throughout the world an enormous wave of sympathy arose. We all want to be close to that people beset by misfortune. (Brother Alois, Rotterdam, Dec. 29, 2010)

Karl (Haiti) spent a few months at Taizé five years ago. He shared the following message a year after the earthquake of January 12, 2010.

While we are preparing to remember our brothers and sisters who are victims of this tragedy, we would like to renew our enduring trust in the light that guides the footsteps of the young people from five continents who come on pilgrimage to the little hill of Taizé.

I invite you again to pray for all those who, on this day of great sadness, did not hide their spirit of solidarity and generosity in coming to help these poor innocent people, these orphaned children who were crying, burying their relatives and clearing the rubble from their houses with their weak fingers.

Pray too for our brothers and sisters who are victims of cholera. Their houses were destroyed in the earthquake. Their fields were devastated by hurricanes. They had no hospitals, no water to quench their thirst.

Today, after a year in the camps where they still languish in abject poverty, they still hope for an emergency response, for a better tomorrow.

Pray finally so that the reconstruction of Haiti may begin with brotherhood, true love, and the urgency of clearing the rubble from the hearts of all those who hinder this process.

After the Latin American meeting in Chile, I spent two days in Haiti. Many years ago some of us were already there with Brother Roger, and since then the links with that country have become stronger and stronger. Twenty-five young Haitians attended the meeting in Santiago. (Brother Alois, Rotterdam, Dec. 29, 2010)

Iliana (Haiti)

I was already used to listening to the songs of Taizé and I had heard about the prayers and the meetings. But being present myself in Santiago was for me an extraordinary experience. What struck me most was the hospitality and communion during the meeting, in spite of the different peoples, cultures and traditions, and the sharing and trust that reigned.

The prayers together, so deep and touching, revived my faith and gave me courage. Now I keep on hoping, trying to live as a daughter of God in all these trials we are experiencing. Today I can testify in my community and in my country that I met God and I share his joy. I tell my friends that they can trust that God is faithful. I also tell them that we have thousands of brothers and sisters who pray with us and rely on our humble prayer.

Exantus (Haiti)

The meeting in Santiago, entitled "For a fraternal world," was an unforgettable

moment, shared with young Latinos and young people from other continents.

If I say that this moment is unforgettable, that is because we live in a country torn apart for years by a crisis, a country that is facing too many problems. Yet, by sharing with others, we found that we are not alone. Everywhere, there are challenges that young people of my generation face and have to overcome. It should also be noted that the hospitality received in Chile in parishes and families shows that we are on track—and I come from a country where hospitality is our main characteristic, as a result of our history with other peoples.

We returned home with much joy in our hearts after attending a meeting full of spirituality, sharing and solidarity. We are determined to work more effectively with some young people from the Dominican Republic, who also want to join us to work for the happiness and prosperity of a more harmonious island, since we had the opportunity to have very friendly discussions with them in Chile.

In Santiago, Chile, joy characterized our second Latin American meeting. For many young Latin Americans, faith in God is linked to the joy of

Continued on last page

Overcoming Evil with Good

Paul writes: Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. (...) If possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with all. (...) If your enemy is hungry, give him to eat; if he is thirsty, give him to drink, for in so doing you heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21)

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul makes his own one of Jesus' best known teachings—loving one's enemies (cf. Matt 5:43ff, Luke 6:27ff). Like Jesus, Paul asks for an attitude of kindness to all, an attitude that goes to the point of wishing good to those who wish us ill: "Bless those who persecute you" (v.14).

This kindness is made concrete through sharing the joys and sorrows of others: "Rejoice with those who rejoice..." (v.15). This reminds us of Paul's own example, who says of himself: "I have become all things to all" (1 Corinthians 9:22).

In the wake of the Book of Proverbs, Paul asks his hearers not to render evil for evil (v.17), demonstrates great realism by encouraging them to live in peace with everyone as much as possible (v. 18), and invites them not to attempt to do justice in God's place (v.19).

In the teaching of Jesus, love of enemies is first described from the perspective of one who loves. It consists in following the example of God himself, looking for nothing in return and not discriminating between people. Here, Paul emphasizes another aspect, a kind of finality of this love: "...you will heap burning coals on their head" (v.20).

At first sight the image seems to have something violent about it, as if by our love we wanted to ensure that the other person receives well-deserved retribution from God. But perhaps the image indicates instead the hope that the good done to the other might perturb them intensely, burning within them so that they change, something like the proposal of Jesus "to turn the other cheek" or "to go the extra mile" with one's opponent to incite them to review their behavior (see Matt 5:39-41). This is confirmed by the rest of the text, which shows that the true purpose of love is to overcome evil with good.

Paul asserts that those who practice love of enemies are not only made "perfect" as the Gospel of Matthew says, but also help to overcome enmity with love, by following Jesus, who himself set the example by his death on the cross,.

How do I react when someone wants to hurt me?

How can I share the joys and sorrows of those around me?

What example can I give of a situation where the good done to another triumphed over evil?

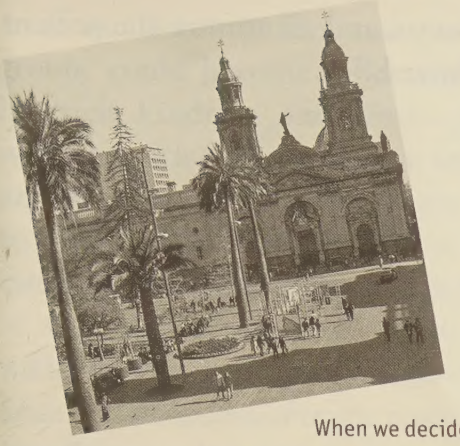
Amos

The first prophet in Israel who left us a written co
lection of his oracles is a man who even refused to b
called a prophet! Amos, a breeder of sheep and goa
was a native of the South, and God surprised him
the midst of his work to send him to the other end
the land. He went to Bethel, a royal sanctuary in th
Northern Kingdom, to proclaim a message in th
name of the Lord (Amos 1:1-2; 7:14-15). His me
sage was that, in spite of appearances of peace an
prosperity, the society was seriously ill, undermine
from within by the search for security and happine
elsewhere than in God.

Pitilessly, Amos laid out the symptoms of th
illness for all to see: the scandalous luxury of a tin
minority of newly rich (3:12-15; 6:4-6) which a
companied a growing exploitation of the poo
(4:1; 5:7.10-12; 8:4-6), and worship reduced t
formality and self-justification (4:4-5; 5:21-24
The material success of the upper classes mad
them gradually forget the reason for their exis
ence, their basic identity as a nation—the cov
nant with the God who liberated them from sla
ery to create a people unlike any other, founde
on solidarity and sharing.

Given these conditions, what the people call "co
fidence in God" and "Israel as a chosen people
is shown to be a false security that will be brutall
proven wrong (5:17) "as though a man fled from
lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered h
house and rested his hand on the wall only to have
snake bite him" (5:19). The prophet grasped that th
particular call which Israel has received is in no wa
a privilege; on the contrary, it entails a greater de
gree of responsibility to live in the way God wishe
(3:2). One cannot call upon God while refusing t
go along with God's vision of society, to work fo
harmony and peace: "You have turned justice int
poison and the fruit of righteousness into worm
wood" (6:12).

Amos contrasts this deplorable situation with th
time of the Exodus, not out of nostalgia, imaginin
that the people were better then, but because Isra



When we decided, with those responsible for young adult ministry in Chile, that our second international meeting in Latin America would be held in Santiago from December 8-12, 2010, we had no idea that 2010 would be a year in which, for the people of Chile, the trials would be commensurate with the joys. Preparing the young adult meeting throughout this year allowed several of our brothers to share in both of these.

At the same time as Chileans celebrated, with other Latin American countries, the bicentennial of the birth of the Republic, the violence of land and sea inflicted great suffering on them.

The earthquake in February affected the poor most of all. But the outpouring of generosity that arose from the depths of the nation's soul showed to what extent Chileans are one family, united in adversity. Many young Chileans went to help those who had lost home and work. They gave their time and energy to build *mediasaguas*, small wooden huts that serve as temporary housing.

In the same year, Chile's indigenous peoples, notably some groups of the Mapuche people, expressed their suffering and their demands by undertaking a long hunger strike.

A little later, the images of 33 miners being brought back to the surface after the mine accident gave joy to an entire nation.

In early December, the international meeting enabled 8000 young people, not only from Chile but from throughout the continent, to share joys, sorrows and challenges and so to work together to bring about a more human world.

We were happy to welcome 25 young Haitians to this meeting. Their presence reminded us of the enormous distress which the earthquake of January 2010 caused in their country. The wounds are far from healed. A short visit to Haiti, between the Santiago meeting and the European meeting in Rotterdam, offered Brother Alois a way of expressing the solidarity of young people from all continents as well as their admiration: faith keeps that people on their feet in the midst of adversity.

We will continue to pray with them during the coming year:

God our hope, we entrust to you the people of Haiti. Dismayed by the incomprehensible suffering of the innocent, we ask you to inspire the hearts of those who bring the necessary aid. We know the deep faith of the Haitian people. Assist those who suffer; strengthen those who are downcast; comfort those who mourn; pour out your Spirit of compassion upon this deeply stricken and deeply loved people.

This *Letter from Chile*, written by Brother Alois for the year 2011, was released during the European meeting which brought together 30,000 young adults in Rotterdam at the end of December 2010.

LETTER 2011

Letter from Chile

JOY

A joyful heart, that is your life. Leave sadness behind![1] This appeal from a believer who lived long before Christ is also meant for us today.

We undergo trials and suffering in our lives, sometimes for long periods. But we always want to try and rediscover the joy of living.[2]

Where does this joy come from?

It is awakened by an unexpected meeting, by a lasting friendship, by artistic creation or again by the beauty of nature....

Love shown to us engenders a happiness which gradually fills the depths of the soul.[3]

1 See Sirach 30:22-23. A Christian of the second century called Hermas likewise wrote: "Put on cheerfulness.... All will live for God who drive away sadness from themselves, and put on all cheerfulness."

2 What brings a human life to fulfillment is not spectacular exploits, but a serene joy that touches the depths of the heart. The unfinished and fragmented character of every life, along with the suffering, is not eliminated, but this does not extinguish serenity.

3 The Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann (1921-1983) wrote in his *Journal*: "Joy about nothing concrete, joy from the beyond; the joy of God's presence touching the soul. And the experience of this touch, of this joy (which will never be taken away since it has become the deepest part of the soul) will determine the course, the direction of one's thoughts and one's relationship to life."

And then we are led to make a conscious choice, to opt for joy.

Sometimes those who suffer poverty and deprivation are capable of a spontaneous joy in living, a joy that resists discouragement.[4]

When the Bible repeatedly invites us to be joyful, it shows us the source. This joy does not depend only on passing circumstances; it comes from trust in God: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.... The Lord is near."[5]

Christ did not come to found a religion that would be in competition with others. In him, God shared our condition so that every human being might know that they are loved with eternity's love and so find joy in communion with God. When we believe in him, our eyes are opened still more to all that is human—a mother's love for her child, the devotion of those who care for the sick.... In these acts of generosity Christ is present, sometimes without being recognized.[6]

Christ brings a radical renewal of human beings. He first lived this new life himself and he struggled to remain faithful. On the eve of his arrest he broke bread while saying these mysterious words: "This is my body, given for you."[7] Yes, he is "the Word made flesh."[8] He turned his unjust death into a gift of his life. Risen from the dead, he breathed on his disciples to communicate the Holy Spirit, the very life of God.[9]

The Holy Spirit sets the joy of the Risen Christ in the depths of our being. It is not only there when everything is easy. When we are faced with a challenging task, the effort can reawaken joy. And even in times of trial, it can remain buried like embers under the ashes, without going out.[10] In praise, we let it well up in us, and all at once the present moment is illuminated.[11]

COMPASSION

Opting for joy does not mean running away from life's problems. Instead, it enables us to face reality, and even suffering.

Opting for joy is inseparable from a concern for other human beings. It fills us with unlimited compassion.

Tasting God's joy, however fleetingly, turns us into women and men of communion. Individualism as a road to happiness is an illusion.[12]

Being witnesses to communion requires the courage to swim against the stream. The Holy Spirit will give us the imagination we need to find ways of remaining close to those who suffer, to listen to them and to let situations of distress affect us.[13]

The road to happiness, in the steps of Jesus, lies in giving ourselves day by day. Through the lives we live, in great simplicity, we can express God's love.

4 Years later, I still think of those I met in Haiti when I visited that country with Brother Roger. In that beautiful country people live in utter destitution. I cannot forget the mothers who often did not know in the morning whether they would have enough to feed their children that day. And yet, for most Haitians, even the disastrous earthquake of January 2010 was not able to call their trust in God into question!

5 Philippians 4:4-5.

6 See Matthew 25:35-40.

7 Luke 22:19.

8 John 1:14.

9 John 20:22.

10 Father Basil Gondikakis, the abbot of a monastery on Mount Athos, expressed this in a mystical language full of poetry: "With the example and the help of the Virgin, every peaceful and transparent soul, open to the divine will, can become a Mother of God according to grace, conceiving and giving birth to a little joy that transcends death."

11 Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: "Now you too are sad, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you" (John 16:22).

12 The Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965) wrote: "The Thou meets me by grace—it is not found by seeking. But my speaking of the primary word to it, saying Thou, is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of my being... I become myself through my relation to the Thou; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*. All real living is meeting."

13 Alberto Hurtado (1901-1952) is a Chilean saint, canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2005. That Jesuit priest is venerated in his country because of his life given for the poor. He started the "Homes of Christ" where homeless persons, children, women and men in difficult situations are offered hospitality. The theme running through his entire life and activity was this question: what would Christ do in my place? In 1947, he wrote about those who were entrusted to him: "The first thing to do is to love them.... To love them so much that I am not able to stand their sufferings.... My mission cannot be limited to comforting them with fine words and leaving them in their misery while I eat comfortably and lack nothing. Their suffering must pain me.... To love them so that they can live, so that a human life can grow in them, so that their minds open and they do not remain on the side of the road. If we love them, we will know what we have to do for them. Will they respond? Yes, in part...and nothing done in love is lost."

If our communities, our parishes and youth groups could become more and more places of heartfelt kindness and trust—places where we welcome each other, where we seek to understand and support others, places where we are attentive to the weakest, to those who are not in our usual circle, to those who are poorer than we are.

One sign of our times is the great generosity with which so many people have come to the assistance of the victims of tragic natural disasters. How can this generosity motivate our societies, even in everyday life?[14]

As necessary as material aid is in emergency situations, it is not enough. The important thing is to restore justice to the destitute.[15]

Christians in Latin America remind us that the fight against poverty is a struggle for justice. Justice in international relations, not aid.[16]

We must learn to overcome fear. We are all familiar with that reflex of self-protection which consists in wanting to keep ourselves safe even at the expense of the welfare of others. And it seems to be becoming more pronounced in our day, as feelings of insecurity grow. What can prevent us from giving in to fear? Is it not by reaching out to others, even to those who seem to be a threat?

Immigration is another sign of our times. It is sometimes perceived as a danger, but it is a reality here to stay which is already shaping the future.[17]

A further sign of our times is the growing poverty within rich countries, where abandonment and isolation are often the main causes of economic uncertainty.

Over-accumulating material possessions kills joy. It keeps us trapped in envy. Happiness lies elsewhere: by choosing a simple lifestyle, working not just for profit but to give meaning to life, sharing with others, everyone can help create a future of peace. God does not give a spirit of timidity but a spirit of love and inner strength.[18]

FORGIVENESS

The Gospel encourages us to take a further step: justice must go as far as forgiveness; human societies cannot live without it. In many parts of the world, the wounds of history are deep. So let us dare to put an end to what can end today. In that way the future of peace, prepared in the heart of God, can be fully deployed.

Believing in God's forgiveness does not mean forgetting offenses. The message of forgiveness can never be used to condone injustice. On the contrary, believing in forgiveness makes us freer to recognize our own faults, as well as the mistakes and injustices around us and in the world. It is up to us to repair anything that can be made good. On this difficult path we find an essential support: in the communion of the Church, God's forgiveness can be granted again.

14 During his visit to Britain, Pope Benedict XVI made this appeal: "The world has witnessed the vast resources that governments can draw upon to rescue financial institutions deemed 'too big to fail'. Surely the integral human development of the world's peoples is no less important: here is an enterprise, worthy of the world's attention, that is truly 'too big to fail'."

15 "It is not your possessions that you distribute to the poor; you are simply giving them back what belongs to them. For you have only kept for yourself what is given to all for the use of all. The earth belongs to all and not only to the rich, but it was expropriated by a few to the detriment of all who work it. So, far from accomplishing acts of great generosity, you are only paying your debt." (Ambrose of Milan, fourth century)

16 In the final document of the meeting in Aparecida (May 2007), the Catholic Church of Latin America wrote: "Working for the common good means promoting just regulation of the economy, finances, and world trade. It is crucial that the burden of foreign debt be lifted in order to foster investments in development and social spending. Global regulations should be devised to prevent and control speculative movement of capital, promote fair trade and the lowering of the protectionist barriers of the powerful, assure adequate prices for raw materials produced by impoverished countries and fair regulations for attracting and regulating investments and services."

17 Of course immigration must be regulated, not by fear of foreigners, but by a true concern for their integration. For immigrants, finding housing and work and learning the language are priorities. For host countries, granting rights goes hand in hand with the reasonable expectation of duties. Should not the calling of Christians in this context be to show, by their lives, that fear of the foreigner as a foreigner is not justified? Becoming acquainted and getting to know one another can be a first step in overcoming the fear that comes from ignorance.

18 See 2 Timothy 1:7.

Upcoming Stages in the Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth

With young people from throughout Europe, Brother Alois and other brothers will go to Moscow from April 20-25, 2011, to celebrate Holy Week and Easter with the Russian Orthodox Church.

The 34th young adult European meeting will take place in Berlin, Germany, from December 28, 2011 to January 1, 2012.

The third international meeting in Africa will be held in Kigali, Rwanda, from November 14-18, 2012.

Messages received for the Rotterdam meeting: see http://www.taize.fr

Every human being needs forgiveness just as much as daily bread.[19] God gives it always, unconditionally, "the One who forgives all your sins."[20] Opening our hands in prayer is a simple gesture that can express our desire to welcome it.

When we pray in the Our Father: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive...," God's forgiveness already touches us. They are not empty words: something happens when we pray using those words which Jesus himself taught us. And then we are ready to forgive in our turn, and not condemn another person definitively when we have been wronged.

Christ distinguished between the person and the offense committed. Until his last breath on the cross, he refused to condemn anyone. And instead of minimizing the fault, he took it upon himself.

There are situations where we do not manage to forgive. The wound is too big. We should then remember that God's forgiveness never fails. As for us, it is sometimes only by stages that we succeed. The desire to forgive is already a first step, even when that desire remains engulfed in bitterness.

By forgiving, God does more than wipe away the offense. He gives a new life in his friendship, rekindled day and night by the Holy Spirit.

Welcoming and sharing God's forgiveness is the road that Christ has opened. We move forward on it in spite of our weaknesses and our wounds. Christ does not turn us into women and men who have already reached the goal.

We are the poor of the Gospel; being Christians does not mean claiming to be better than others. What characterizes us is simply the choice to belong to Christ. In making this choice we want to be wholly consistent.[21]

And we can all make this discovery: forgiveness received or extended creates joy. Knowing that we are forgiven is perhaps one of the deepest, most liberating of joys. It is the source of the inner peace that Christ wants to communicate to us. That peace will lead us far; it will radiate outwards for others and for the world.[22]

f. Alois

19 Suzanne de Dietrich (1891-1981), a Protestant theologian who, at the beginnings of Taizé, encouraged Brother Roger and the first brothers not to hesitate to commit themselves in community for their entire lifetime, wrote: "A Christian is someone who lives in forgiveness, who knows that every day he transgresses the commandments of God, but who also returns to God every day and who knows, with invincible certainty, that God will have the last word in his life. Christ has taken charge of him, has taken responsibility for him before his Father. He is not alone in his fight; the one to whom he gave himself will never abandon him. His assurance is based not on what he already is, but on what God is, on the faithfulness and the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. That is why his progress does not blind him and his defeats do not discourage him. He always gets up again because he does not belong to himself; he belongs to another."

20 Psalm 103:3. This entire psalm sings of God's forgiveness. And the prophet Isaiah, in a somber period of history, reminded the nation that God always forgives, saying: "I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud..." (Isaiah 44:22).

21 "Christians do not merely belong to Jesus Christ as all human beings undoubtedly belong to him, but do so in such a way that the work which Jesus Christ does in the world is also the meaning of their action; the fight which Jesus Christ wages in the darkness against darkness is the cause to which they dedicate themselves." (Karl Barth, 1886-1968)

22 Seraphim of Sarov, a Russian monk of the nineteenth century (1759-1833), wrote: "Achieve inner peace and thousands around you will be saved."

totally in the hands of the Lord who guided her
0; 3:1). If in the desert there were no elaborate
rgies (5:25), that was because Israel had nothing
ffer to God and everything to receive from him.
st was absolutely necessary, because it was the
y way to go forward.

t present, however, the prophet has almost no
e that the nation will come to its senses and avoid
worst. He can already see the approaching catas-
phe on the horizon. The dire picture he paints
es room for just one small ray of light, if Israel is
act able to return to God and live rightly: "This
hat the Lord says to the house of Israel: Seek me
l live.... Seek good, not evil, that you may live.
en the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just
ou say he is" (5:4.14). Otherwise the nation will
e to walk once again on the road of trials, a time
apparent abandonment when "people will stag-
from sea to sea and wander from north to east,
rching for the word of the Lord, and they will not
d it" (8:12). Since she is no longer on pilgrimage
h God, the nation's reasons for security will be
n away and she will be forced to take the road of
le: perhaps then (though Amos never says so ex-
citly) she will then meet her first Love once again.

he book of Amos would make practically in-
erable reading were it not for the fact that
sense, beneath the passion of his anger, the
rtrending cry of a love that is scorned. It is the
nizing sadness of someone who sees his com-
riots abandoning their true happiness in order
run after mere figments of their imagination.
s true that nowadays we are somewhat allergic
this "fire and brimstone" style of preaching,
ich rarely attains its objective, that of leading
a conversion. We can nonetheless realize that
at motivates the prophet is in fact love for his
ff-necked" people and the urgency of con-
nting them with the truth of their condition.

mos' true attitude becomes clear when he is
t speaking to others but is alone with God.
ter he had seen in visions the appalling fate
t awaits the nation, twice we read: "I said:
Lord God, forgive, I beg you! How can Jacob
nd? He is so small!" And each time God
lies, "It shall not be" (7:1-6). The prophet
is manages to put off, at least for a time, the
aster which the nation is calling down upon
lf. In this Amos is, despite appearances, a
e man of reconciliation, placing himself be-
een his people and his God, running the risk
being torn apart in the attempt to hold the
o together.

How should a Christian struggle for justice?

The struggle for justice did not seem to be a priority for Jesus. One day he replied to a man who asked for his help in dividing property fairly, "Who made me a judge or arbiter over you?" (Luke 12:14). On another occasion he advised: "If someone takes away your goods, do not ask for them back" (Luke 6:30).

At the same time, we get from Jesus a poignant denunciation of scandalous inequality: the story of Lazarus, a poor man who was not even allowed to feed on "what fell from the rich man's table" (Luke 16:21). But in this parable as well, Jesus gives no instructions for fighting injustice. He refers to "Moses and the prophets," saying that it would be enough to listen to them (Luke 16:29-31).

It would also be enough to listen to John the Baptist: "Whoever has two tunics should share with the one who has none, and whoever has food should do likewise." John urges tax collectors: "Collect no more than what is prescribed," and soldiers: "Do not harass anyone; do not extort anything" (Luke 3:11-14).

By his great regard for the Law of Moses, the prophets and John, Jesus unequivocally confirms the need for justice. For a Christian, it is not something optional. But then how can we interpret Jesus' reluctance to settle disputes involving justice, and his invitation to go to the point of giving up one's rights?

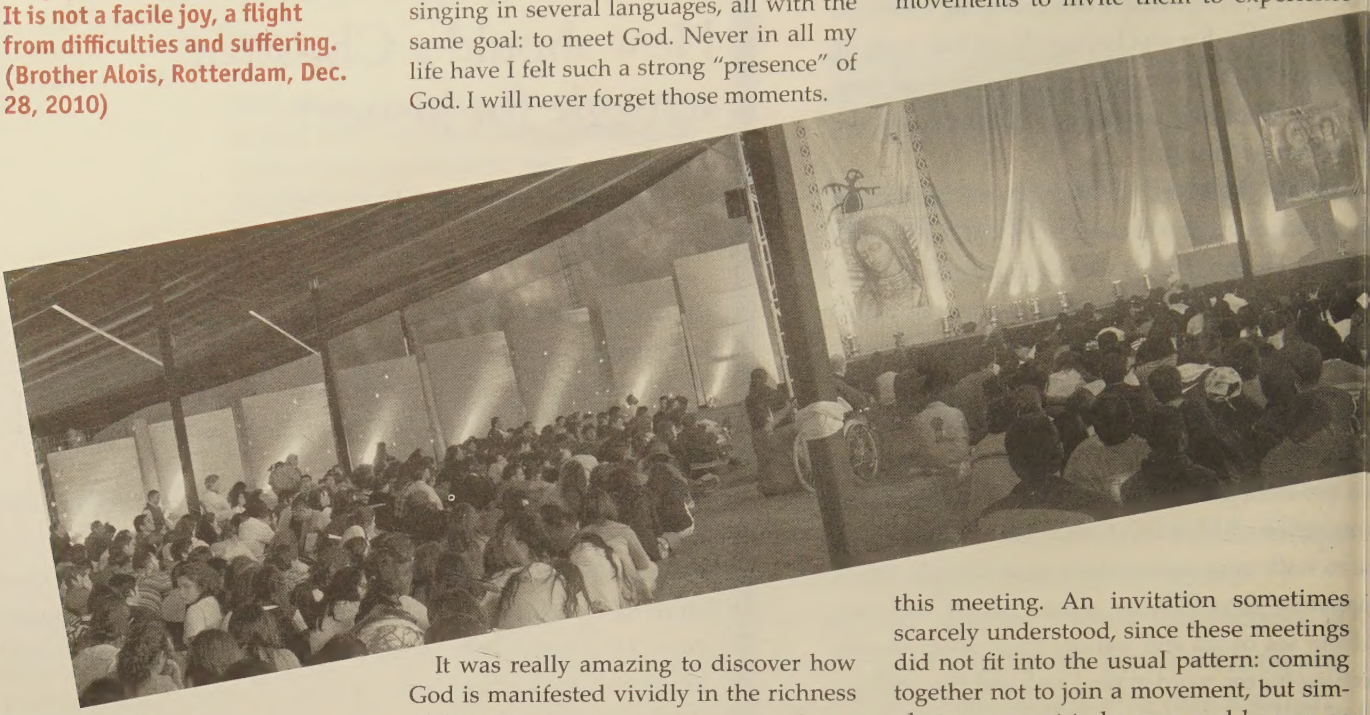
The Law and the prophets ask of Christians what is required of any person: to respect the rights of others and to act with kindness (see Micah 6:8). Jesus radicalized the struggle for justice, because, with him, the kingdom of God is there in embryo, God's presence and concern are more immediate.

The struggle for justice becomes more radical by becoming first and foremost an inner struggle. "Beware of all covetousness" (Luke 12:15). As long as people's main motivation is envy of the wealth of others, there will be no justice.

This struggle becomes more radical by the paradox: "If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other also; from anyone who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt" (Luke 6: 29). Turning the other cheek to someone who strikes you is a risky fighting technique. The aggressor may deal a second blow. But this unexpected reaction may also destabilize and create a pause, a moment of suspense in which a different kind of relationship may possibly begin.

Ultimately, fighting for justice according to the Gospel means being ready to give our life day after day. "This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. And we too ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If someone enjoys the good things of this world and sees a brother or sister in need and closes his heart to them, how can the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:16-17).

living, the joy of friendship, and the joy of meeting with others. It is not a facile joy, a flight from difficulties and suffering. (Brother Alois, Rotterdam, Dec. 28, 2010)



Amelia (Argentina)

The pilgrimage of trust was an experience of grace and communion lived in Christ, a God who became incarnate for love. In Chile we were welcomed with open arms. Hearts were ready to allow God to work according to his will, both in the pilgrims and in those who welcomed us. It was an experience of brotherhood in which all could share the joy of being children of God and therefore brothers and sisters now and forever.

What most astonished my heart was the atmosphere of hope I could breathe, every one of us, pilgrims laden with wounds, suffering and joy that united us in the hope of a better world, full of peace and love, a world in which we are all human beings living in the love of Christ and discovering in this our true calling.

Through this pilgrimage, the Lord also opened doors between brothers and sisters who live in lands close to one another, doors that strengthened bonds of friendship and communion, and that allowed us to further unite in prayer, prayer which bears fruit across the distances and is so efficient that it can make the invisible visible in each of us, making us sharers in Christ.

Francisco (Chile)

Taking part in the pilgrimage of trust in Santiago was a truly fascinating and new experience. I volunteered to help in the meal distribution during those days. One of the most rewarding things was meeting people from other countries. It was nice to share my life with people who had different languages, appearances, customs and cultures.

What impressed me most was the simplicity of it all, especially the moments of prayer. My heart burned within me, seeing myself surrounded by different people, singing in several languages, all with the same goal: to meet God. Never in all my life have I felt such a strong "presence" of God. I will never forget those moments.

It was really amazing to discover how God is manifested vividly in the richness of diversity.

During the meeting, I also took part in some workshops. The first was entitled "Hope and the humanitarian crisis in Haiti." It was impressive to hear the experience of young Haitians, and to discover the strength and the trust with which they faced the great difficulties their country, whose social fabric is torn, is going through. Another workshop was a source of inspiration for me: a meeting with some sisters who have been living an "adventure with Jesus" among the poor for several decades, in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods of Santiago. These life experiences are, without a doubt, signs of hope that encourage us to go beyond our borders. The days of meeting in Santiago allowed me to renew my faith and to realize once again that differences, rather than separating us, are channels to allow us to work together to make the earth a land of brothers and sisters.

Almudena (France)

By accepting to help prepare the Taizé meeting in Santiago, I agreed to be guided by the Lord, without knowing what would fill those five months. Preparing the meeting was a moment of grace, walking with the Lord, both figuratively and literally! Indeed, we made many pilgrimages to different parts of the diocese.

We spent five months visiting the parishes, working with people whom we gradually came to know. Five months of discovering an active Chilean Church, five months of depending as well on different preparation groups. Five months not always easy, with moments of fatigue, when the fruits of the preparation were hard to see....

They were also five months filled with visits to schools, universities and church movements to invite them to experience this meeting. An invitation sometimes scarcely understood, since these meetings did not fit into the usual pattern: coming together not to join a movement, but simply to pray; not to be seen and known as the best, but to live and share the joy of being Christian; not to remain together, but to go to the wellsprings and then return to our daily lives as a light of hope.

More texts of a similar nature can be found at www.taize.fr/letter

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News from Taizé by email twice a month free of charge:
www.taize.fr/taizenews.php

Directeur de publication : A. Trochard, Édition : Ateliers et Presses de Taizé, 71250 Taizé, France, CPPAP n° 0115K79608 - Impression : Comimpress, 01750 Replonges, France — DL 1122